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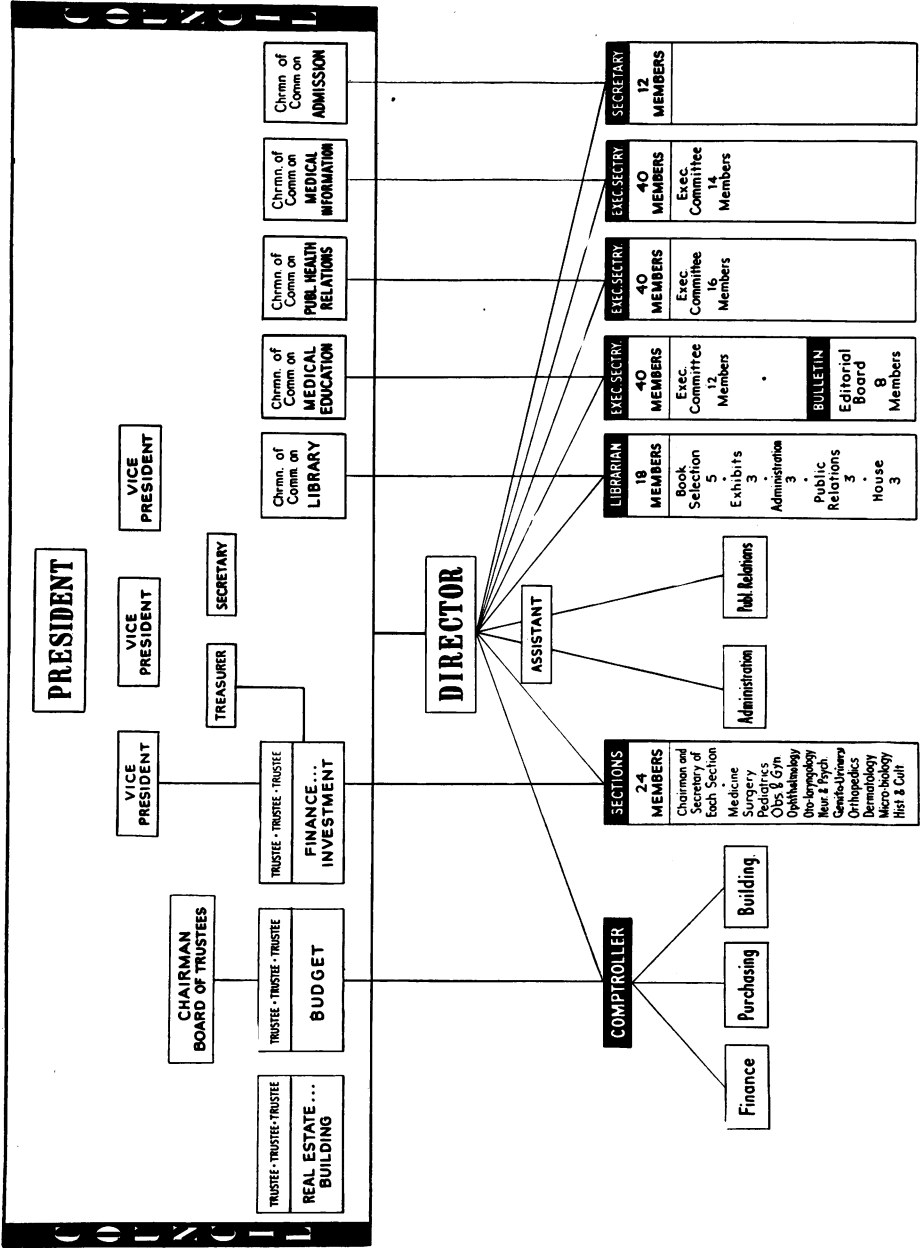
THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF
THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE

HOWARD REID CRAIG

Director, The New York Academy of Medicine

THE appearance of an article on the organizational structure, the functions and the functioning mechanics of The New York Academy of Medicine in its own Bulletin might, at first glance, seem to be a prime example of over-expanded institutional egotism. Far from such being the case, however, this sketch is an attempt to answer, in fairly succinct yet satisfactory fashion, many requests for information concerning the Academy and how it operates. These requests have been received, both in person and by mail, from physicians, from interested non-medical people and from educational institutions and societies scattered over this country and abroad. Referral of these inquirers to blue prints such as the Constitution and By-laws and to annual reports, gives only a suggestion of the machinery that produces the contents of the annual reports. Furthermore, most people shy away from annual reports except under extreme duress. Unfortunately, many annual reports justify this aversion, thus casting a stigma on those that are really readable and stimulating.

Further justification for this exposition lies in the fact that when an institution, educational or otherwise, reaches a certain point in its growth



and maturation, there is a temptation on the part of its component members to take the institution for granted without grasping the significance of its increased scope of activities, the mechanics that make possible its broadened horizons, or the responsibilities, both intrinsic and extrinsic, that that growth engenders. This lack of focus is sometimes the result of a detached disinterestedness, but more often it is due to the fact that concentrated interest in one circumscribed area of the institution's activities obscures the overall picture of the organization, a case of the trees obscuring the forest.

To answer these two needs, namely, to supply information concerning the Academy organization to outside groups, and to lay again before the Fellows of the Academy the structure of the institution of which they are the substance, is the object of this paper.

The New York Academy of Medicine, a non-profit, tax exempt educational institution, was founded in 1847 by a group of one hundred and eighty physicians of this city. Today, its roster numbers approximately 2,800, all elected upon nomination by the Fellowship itself. Its governing body, known as the Council, has sole responsibility, both in general and in particular, for the administration of the Academy and the determination of its policies in all matters, and meets monthly during the academic year. Examination of the accompanying chart, to which reference will be made repeatedly, shows the Council to be made up of the duly elected officers, President, three Vice-presidents, Treasurer, Secretary, ten Trustees and the Chairmen of the five Standing Committees. This group of twenty-one has final decision on all Academy affairs. It should be noted that all of these officers are elected by the Fellowship at large, except the five Standing Committee Chairmen who are elected by their respective committees. It should further be pointed out that the members of the Committees on Library and Admission are elected by the Fellowship at large. Membership on the remaining three committees of forty Fellows each is by appointment of the President and approved by the Council.

The Board of Trustees, of which each member is elected in rotation for a term of five years, elects its own chairman and has sole responsibility for the physical assets of the Academy, for budget make-up, and for the management of its invested funds. For this purpose, under its Chairman, the Board is broken down into three subcommittees to carry on these phases of its activities. In addition, an Executive Committee

made up of the Subcommittee on Finance, the Board Chairman, and the President and the Treasurer of the Academy, is empowered to act for the whole Board of Trustees in emergencies, or when it is impossible to have the whole Board convene. Proceedings or acts of the Board of Trustees are subject to approval of the Council.

At the close of 1950, the total assets for which the Trustees were responsible amounted to \$9,100,964.24. Of this amount, \$3,466,136.52 was represented by fixed assets, that is, building, books, furnishings, etc. For these fixed assets the Real Estate and Building Subcommittee is responsible. The Subcommittee on Budget set up a proposed budget for the Academy for 1951 of \$471,798.00, which was approved. The Subcommittee on Finance and Investment has as its responsibility, the management of a portfolio which amounted to \$6,379,424.00 at the market as of the close of 1950. This Subcommittee meets approximately semi-monthly.

The Chairmen of the five Standing Committees bring to the Council monthly reports of their activities, as well as those problems involving the Academy as a whole and requiring Council responsibility and approval.

Referring again to the chart, it will be seen that the lower half is devoted to the working committees or departments and their staffs.

The office of the Comptroller, responsible to the Director and to the Trustees, is concerned with the usual duties of bookkeeping and accounting, of handling accounts payable and receivable, and making all purchases. Expenditures are scrutinized and budgetary limits watched. Bookings for meetings and assessments for the use of space in the building are handled by one of the offices of this department. Ordinary day to day building maintenance and operation are also managed here. In addition, careful daily watch is kept of the Academy's investment portfolio with regard to movements of the market, and to keeping interest and amortization payments up to date on mortgages held by the Academy. This office, seldom in direct contact with the Fellows themselves, is one of the most active and vital components of the whole Academy structure.

The Committee on Sections, the Chairman of which is one of the Academy Vice-presidents, is composed of the Chairman and Secretary of each of the twelve Academy Sections, who are elected by the Sections themselves. In addition, each Section has an advisory committee made

up of its five preceding Chairmen. This committee of twenty-four is responsible for one of the oldest and most fundamental functions of the Academy, that is, preparation of the programs and the management of the monthly meetings of the Sections. It is here that the real basic and continuing post-graduate educational work of the Academy is carried out. The character of the programs and the conduct of the meetings are entirely in the hands of the Sections, and these vary considerably in the different specialties.

The Committee on Library, composed of eighteen elected Fellows, is subdivided into five subcommittees which are responsible respectively for 1) book selection; 2) exhibits; 3) administration; 4) public relations; 5) building and structural facilities. This Committee works in close cooperation with the Librarian and her staff. For a detailed account of Library activities, the reader is referred to the last annual report of the Academy. A listing and discussion of available Library services may be found in recent numbers of this Bulletin or may be obtained in mimeographed form from the Library itself. However, it is of interest to know that at present the Library contains some 275,000 bound volumes and an equal amount of unbound material, that its readers in 1950 totaled over 40,000, and that its circulation services numbered over 95,000 in the same period. There are fifty-three persons employed on the staff and the overall cost of the Library for 1951 is budgeted at \$196,347. These few figures give some idea of the size, activity and cost of this Library, which is one of the two most important medical libraries in this hemisphere and one of the four or five most important in the world.

The Committee on Medical Education, composed of forty Fellows appointed by the President and approved by the Council has an Executive Secretary and a staff of six. Through subcommittees appointed by the Chairman, this Committee provides a very wide fare of exercises in the field of the continuing education of the practicing physician. It arranges the programs for the monthly Stated Meetings of the Academy. The two-day mid-winter Clinical Research meetings are provided for. The so-called Friday Afternoon Lectures for general practitioners, twenty in number, are planned and produced. The past year's series was the twenty-fifth such annual series. The Graduate Fortnight, devoted to a single subject, the 1951 Fortnight being the twenty-fourth, provides twenty evening lectures, four morning panel discussions, twenty-one afternoon hospital clinics, six televised telecolor programs

of surgical procedures, ten motion picture programs and an extensive and exhaustive scientific exhibit. The 1951 Fortnight, in collaboration with the New York Heart Association, will be devoted to "Disorders of the Circulatory System." All of these functions, together with the award of the Bowen-Brooks Scholarships, are carried on by this committee. In addition, the department maintains the Bureau of Medical Education, which provides information concerning medical education at all levels, medical and hospital practice, and information to governmental, educational and social agencies covering a wide variety of subjects. The grey folder, a monthly calendar of Academy meetings, so well known to physicians in this area, is set up and edited and the daily bulletin, showing surgical operating schedules in the hospitals of the city, together with schedules of conferences, rounds and clinics, is prepared and mailed from this department. On request, lecture series are arranged for the resident staffs of some of the New York hospitals.

Finally, the Academy Bulletin, with an Advisory Editorial Board of eight Fellows appointed by the President, is edited and published in this office.

The Committee on Public Health Relations, initiated as a committee in 1911, is composed of forty Fellows appointed by the President and approved by the Council. Of all the committees of the Academy this Committee is probably best known to the public because it alone, with the approval of the President, is empowered to speak for the Academy in matters of policy with regard to public health and the community. As with other Academy committees, it meets once a month, but its Executive Committee meets weekly. A glance at the report of this Committee in the Academy Annual Report will show the wide range of problems studied. These problems are brought to the Academy from many sources, the medical profession, the lay public, welfare and health agencies, local, state and federal governmental agencies, the legal profession, and the Committee members themselves. The individual problems are assigned to subcommittees for study and investigation. Although the chairmen of these sub-committees are always members of the Committee on Public Health Relations, a unique practice of this Committee has been to enlist as members of its subcommittees those persons conversant with the subject under study, whether in or out of the Academy Fellowship or in or out of the medical profession, and therein has lain part of its strength and effectiveness. Another feature

of the Committee has been that, under the three physicians who have been its successive Chairmen over the forty years of its existence, its membership has been heavily weighted with medical practitioners, with only a small leavening of professional public health men, rather than the reverse. This has had a salutary effect on both groups. The Committee has an Executive Secretary and a research and clerical staff of five.

The Committee on Medical Information occupies a unique place in the life of the Academy and the community at large. Made up of forty Fellows appointed by the President and approved by the Council with an Executive Secretary and a staff of four, it serves as a middle ground between the medical profession and the lay public. As an information center, it received and handled in 1950 more than 12,000 inquiries from physicians and, more important, from lay individuals, organizations and the press. Although the Committee and its staff is in no sense a censoring or policing body, it is, with the help of a panel of some 250 consultants, in a position to advise the lay public and particularly the various media of communication as to the validity of claims, the advisability of publishing certain material or the forms of publishing such material. Under the aegis of various subcommittees, again many diverse projects are regular activities of the Committee. A series of six Lectures to the Laity are given each year by outstanding medical authorities for lay consumption. These lectures are broadcast from the Academy by Station WNYC. In addition, this Committee, in cooperation with the Committee on Medical Education, broadcasts a weekly program, "For Doctors Only," over WNYC-FM. The material presented in these broadcasts consists of recordings culled from the various Academy exercises, the Friday Afternoon Lectures, the Graduate Fortnight, etc. A two-day Health Education Conference for lay workers in the health field is an annual occurrence. The Committee has arranged conferences with outside groups such as the clergy, civil defense authorities, and other groups outside the field of medicine in which there is a community of interests or problems. An annual dinner for the press and radio groups has gone far toward bringing a better mutual understanding of the inter-related problems of medicine and journalism. In addition, the department issues press releases of public interest and reviews manuscripts written by the laity or by physicians for lay reading.

Twelve Fellows, elected by the general Fellowship for rotating

terms of three years each, constitute the Committee on Admission. The Assistant to the Director acts as recording secretary to the Committee which elects its own Chairman and Secretary. It is the function of this Committee to consider each candidate nominated for Fellowship on the basis of his standing and accomplishments in his profession, his contributions in terms of literature, teaching, research, hospital affiliations and general desirability. Those so approved are recommended to the Fellowship at large for election to the Academy. The proceedings of this Committee are, absolutely and without exception, confidential.

Finally, we come to the function of the Director. He is responsible, solely and directly, to the Council for the overall administration of the Academy. He must know what every department is doing, what its problems are, and with what effectiveness it is operating. The work of each department and committee must be coordinated with each of the others so that there is no duplication of effort nor clashing of interests or enthusiasms. To accomplish this, he must attend almost every meeting of every committee. In other words, he must be a part of every Academy activity without putting himself in the position of attempting to direct or control those activities. Initiative and imagination on the part of the Fellows of the Academy and the staff have been most important factors in its growth and strength. As an administrator, the Director must have direct knowledge of the Academy's affairs in relation to finance in the world outside the Academy. In other words, internally, the expenditure of every dollar must be justified; externally, every dollar of invested Academy capital must yield the utmost that is compatible with safety. After administration, the Director's second function is that of establishing cooperative relationships not only within the medical profession, but, just as important, with the world outside of medicine, using the term in its broadest sense—with industry, with governmental agencies of all kinds, with trade unions, with the various health, welfare and social agencies, with the philanthropic foundations, with the universities — in other words, with the community as a whole. Only by such relationships can the potentialities of the Academy, which has the necessary man power and the facilities, be fully realized. That is the Director's second responsibility. Lastly, it is the Director's function to attempt to visualize and anticipate the future of the Academy in terms of its needs, the demands to be made upon it, and its resources for meeting those demands. These are intangibles and unpredictables,

but the day will come when these intangibles will become concrete problems for our professional descendants.

In a short article it is only possible to picture a skeleton of organization, but that skeleton should suggest the broad field in which the Academy functions and how these functions are carried out. No attempt has been made to analyze these functions qualitatively, but any attempt at qualitative evaluation must establish as its basic starting point the fact that the Academy has three prime interests, namely: 1) medical education, aimed particularly at the practicing physician but covering other professional levels and the lay public; 2) a working library of the first magnitude; 3) public health and the welfare of the community. These objectives were clearly stated by the founders of the Academy in 1847 and throughout the years, to the credit of the Fellows, they have remained and are today the fundamental objectives of The New York Academy of Medicine.